

REMARKS

The Office action dated April 21, 2004 has been carefully considered. Claims 1-19 are pending and have not been amended. Reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by United States patent No. 5,984,559 to Shiobara et al. (“Shiobara”). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claims 1 and 13 recite, *inter alia*, that the ball pusher has a contact element “having a shape adapted to conform to the shape of the tip ball.”

The Examiner has identified element 8 of Shiobara as a “ball pusher.” However, Shiobara does not show or suggest forming any portion of element 8 with a shape that conforms to the shape of the tip ball. Accordingly, Shiobara cannot anticipate nor even render obvious the invention recited in independent claims 1 and 13. Withdrawal of this rejection, and reconsideration and allowance of independent claims 1 and 13 and all claims depending therefrom are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-9, 11-13, and 15-19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by United States patent No. 5,277,510 to Okamoto et al. (“Okamoto”). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Like Shiobara, Okamoto does not disclose or suggest a contact element “having a shape adapted to conform to the shape of a tip ball.” For this reason, alone, the present invention is patentable over Okamoto. Moreover, independent claims 1 and 13 further recite that the support element “does not contact said biasing element in a lateral direction.” It is respectfully submitted that element 5, which the Examiner identified as a ball pusher, does not have a support element that does not contact a biasing element in a lateral direction. Instead, element 5 is only disclosed as having a portion that is inserted into the coil of spring 6, and thus laterally contacts a biasing element. Accordingly, independent claims 1 and 13, and all claims depending therefrom, are patentable over Okamoto. Withdrawal of this rejection, and reconsideration and allowance independent claims 1 and 13, and all claims depending therefrom are respectfully requested.

Claims 10 and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Okamoto in view of Shiobara. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, independent claims 1 and 13 are allowable. Because claims 10 and 14 depend from independent claims 1 and 13, respectively, claims 10 and 14 are also allowable.

For the above reasons, reconsideration and allowance of independent claims 1 and 13, and all claims depending therefrom, are respectfully requested. Should the Examiner not agree all claims are allowable, then a personal or telephonic interview with the undersigned is respectfully requested to discuss any remaining issues and to accelerate allowance of the present application.

No fee is believed to be due for this amendment. Should any fee be required, please charge such fee to Jones Day Deposit Account No. 50-3013.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: June 29, 2004


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